

jump-start Medicare reform, provide meaningful relief for the Nation's older people and their families, while addressing the solvency question and the need for an approach to be consistent with long-term Medicare reform.

We have improved on what is being discussed in the House because they do not have the same focus on solvency. I am very much looking forward—as we bring that legislation to the floor of the Senate and it goes to conference and the work in the Finance Committee—to continue the progress we saw this morning.

Suffice it to say, there were a number of moments today when it was likely that it was all going to break down. Had the Budget Committee reported a significantly smaller sum than was finally agreed on, had we not made the kind of changes in the Snowe-Wyden-Smith amendment, we might not have been able to reach a bipartisan agreement on prescription drugs this year in the Congress. As a result of what happened today in the Budget Committee and the important work that was done on a bipartisan basis, we have laid the foundation for making sure that before this Congress adjourns and goes home for the year, we have acted to help the Nation's older people.

For all of those seniors and for all the families who are walking an economic tightrope, balancing their food costs against their fuel bills and their fuel bills against their medical bills, my admonition this afternoon is that we have a long way to go, but today we really made progress.

Today, as a result of bipartisan work, we have an opportunity to ensure that by fall, on or before September 1, as the amendment adopted in the Budget Committee requires, we have a proposal that is bipartisan, that is one which provides meaningful relief for older people, that is voluntary, offers universal coverage, and is consistent with long-term Medicare reform. We can have that kind of proposal on the floor of the Senate this fall.

For the millions of seniors and families who are watching the Congress and looking to see if we can deliver on this issue, progress was made today. I particularly commend Senator SNOWE and Senator SMITH. Senator SMITH made a very constructive suggestion towards the end of the markup when we had a debate about when the Budget Committee was seeking a product from the Finance Committee. Senator SMITH offered a very constructive suggestion. If we can continue to build on that bipartisan progress, we can get this job done.

I believe—and I will wrap up with this—this country can no longer afford to deny coverage for senior citizens' prescription needs under Medicare. I use those words deliberately. People ask if we can afford to offer the coverage. I am of the view that we cannot

afford not to offer this coverage because the revolution in American health care is about these new medicines that help people stay well.

I have pointed out repeatedly that one can spend \$1,000 or \$1,500 on anticoagulant medicines that help prevent strokes and can stop a stroke that costs more than \$100,000.

Today, we made very significant progress in ensuring that no longer does the revolution in American health care bypass the Medicare program. I look forward to defending what was done in the Budget Committee on prescription drugs on the floor of the Senate when we get to the budget and working with the Finance Committee. Senators MOYNIHAN and ROTH have been very gracious in assuring there will be an opportunity for colleagues in both parties to contribute and offer their ideas and suggestions.

If we can continue to build on the progress that was made today in the Budget Committee, we will get this done, and we will get it done before the end of this session. In my view, this will revolutionize American health care and provide meaningful relief to older people and their families.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LAUNCHING OUR COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO LOCAL TELEVISION ACT OF 2000—Continued

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, many of us worked very hard last year to reauthorize and update the Satellite Home Viewer Act.

Our principle accomplishment was to authorize satellite carriers to provide local television stations to their subscribers. This change has already spurred enormous growth in the satellite industry and is providing growing competition to the cable industry.

Unfortunately, the satellite providers—Echostar and DirecTV—made it very clear that their business plans did not contemplate serving rural areas. They were very busy, and they were very upfront in telling us that they were focusing their energies on the top 40 television markets.

So it was clear to Senators like myself who represent rural States that local-into-local was not going to be a reality unless we took additional action to encourage coverage for the 50 percent of the population that could watch the service being offered in television ads, but couldn't pick up the phone and order it.

We still see a lot of "not available in Alaska and Hawaii" fine print on advertisements.

They plagued us during telephone days, and now they are plaguing us in this period of rapid extension of new technology.

That is where the idea was born to provide loan guarantees to help make this service more available to more Americans.

All of us owe Senator CONRAD BURNS a debt of gratitude for pushing this issue so hard and for drafting the measure that was included in last year's satellite bill. That provision was dropped.

While it was unfortunate that this provision was removed from the final bill, I am pleased that it is here today, albeit in another form.

It is my hope the Senate will move quickly to adopt this measure and will resist accepting amendments that would threaten its ultimate enactment.

I thank the Chair and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATOR TED STEVENS— ALASKAN OF THE CENTURY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to say a couple of words about one of my oldest and best friends in the Senate, the senior Senator from Alaska, Mr. STEVENS.

Last week, Senator STEVENS was named "Alaskan of the Century." Most of us feel pretty fortunate if we get named for the day, or possibly for the week, and sometimes even the month in our States. He was named "Alaskan of the Century."

Well, my good friend, TED STEVENS, deserves that. He has a way about him, as we all know. He keeps me humble. I might talk about the hardships of a cold winter day in Vermont. But then I see his eyebrows go up when he explains to me that 40 degrees below zero is just beginning to get nippy—it gets to 75 below in Fairbanks. At that point, I know I am beat.

TED STEVENS is a tireless legislator, a respected leader. He helped create the State of Alaska. How many of us could actually say something like that? He actually helped create a State with his tireless work and brought it into the Union. He did this having already served his country in so many